

that is going to be upon business, farmers, timber fallers, you don't get a good result.

The Biden administration needs to take a real good hard look at how economics actually work and quit doing this to the American people because, I will tell you what, we are not going to have much left after 4 years of all this.

I appreciate my friend here from Louisiana trying to bring this to the American people with the time here tonight on seeing how this 9 months in of the Biden administration is costing and hurting regular Americans.

Mr. JOHNSON of Louisiana. Madam Speaker, Mr. LAMALFA is exactly right. It has been only 9 months. It is only going to get worse.

Madam Speaker, what you have heard tonight is a quick summary from a number of our friends. We could go on for hours if we had the time, but I know we are almost out of time.

We talked about the economic crisis, energy crisis, foreign policy crisis, border crisis. It goes on and on and on. I will summarize and close with this: We have two competing visions for America. It is now very clear: It is free-market capitalism v. Big Government socialism.

I think the American people see the results of the latter. I hope we have an opportunity very soon in the next election cycle to get back to the former.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1730

THE CARE ECONOMY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SPEIER) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the majority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from California?

There was no objection.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I am astonished by the last hour. It is like they are living in a different universe. If you look at the economic growth in the United States under this administration, it is actually growing at such a rate that by the end of the year it will have reached 6 percent in growth. So all of that blather that went on on the other side of the aisle should be registered as what it is: False.

But we are here to talk about something much more important than a bunch of lies. We are here to talk about what 90 Members of the Democratic Women's Caucus are concerned about, and that is the care economy. The question that we want to ask is: Why

does America not value our families or our children?

Why is it that France has provided 8 weeks of maternity leave to working women since 1913—yes, since 1913—yet we struggle to provide paid family leave?

Why is it that Germany 30 years ago was able to decide children have the right to quality childcare, yet some of my colleagues call universal childcare and pre-K a handout?

Surely if our European counterparts can understand that childcare and pre-K is not babysitting, it is education that fuels the brain and emotional development in the most formative years of a child's life so that children can grow and thrive, we certainly can grasp that.

Surely my colleagues who stand here and preach about the sanctity of life can understand the hypocrisy of advocacy for birth but not advocacy for life. After they come out of the womb is when we should be investing in them.

And surely, they can understand that the she-cession that happens to both Republican women and Democratic women is real in this country and has resulted from a pandemic that isn't just a burden on working women and families, it is a burden on all of us. It is an issue that touches every corner of our society and government from national security to economic growth, and most importantly, the health and well-being of our children and the progress of our country as we work to build back better.

Now, I am just getting started here, but I have got many colleagues who are here and want to speak to this issue.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey (Ms. SHERRILL).

Ms. SHERRILL. Madam Speaker, I thank Chairwoman SPEIER for yielding. I appreciate it.

I rise today to talk about the childcare crisis facing our Nation, and by extension, our national economy.

I rise today to share the stories from working mothers in my district, to outline the disastrous impact maintaining the status quo will have for families and communities and businesses, and to instill a sense of urgency for addressing this childcare crisis, because prior to COVID, women represented over half the working people in this Nation. Over half.

So let's be clear, when working moms are losing ground, that is the American middle class losing ground. And the current reality of the American childcare system is endless waitlists for spots that may never open up.

The current reality is unreasonable costs that eat away at 20, 30, 40 percent of a working parent's paycheck.

In fact, I have a constituent who has two children in childcare and pays over the amount of their paycheck in childcare. And in over half of the States in this Nation, center-based infant care costs more than in-State college tuition. That is what is facing families today.

And the current reality is to make it work, often for families—including my own family—the only way you make it work is with the help of grandparents or friends. So God help you, if you don't have that safety net in place.

The current reality is that too many moms are being forced to leave their jobs because they simply can't make it work. And if we don't act, too many of those moms will not be able to re-enter our workforce.

Two weeks ago, I convened a round table to have an in-depth conversation with working women in NJ-11. The stories I heard on that call mirror the experiences of women across my district, of the women serving alongside me in this legislative body, and they mirror my own experiences over the past 16 years as a working mom raising my four children.

Anyone who has had a child in the last few decades knows that the barriers to entry for childcare in America begin before your first child is even born. You are only pregnant for 9 months, but mothers have told me about 2-year waiting lists and a dearth of available options.

That situation got worse during the pandemic, with many centers closing down or going out of business.

And that is the current reality when things go according to plan.

During that round table, we heard from too many people who had changes in their lives which upended their whole childcare plan. During that round table, I heard from a professor who told me about how her search for childcare became twice as hard when she and her wife found out they were expecting twins. It got even harder than that when they were born premature and had health concerns that required in-home care.

She and her spouse were forced to make the impossible choice to cut their income in half so one of them could stay at home or to incur the astronomically high cost of in-home care. That is the catch-22 our families are facing too many times today.

I have a working mom and a councilwoman in my district who faced a similar dilemma. When she had her son, she was lucky enough to find a great childcare center with space for him, but the price of quality care was steep. She was in the position where her salary was just above the cost of care. Like far too many women, she considered leaving the workforce simply because the costs were unjustifiable. But in her case, she couldn't afford not to work. And she is lucky she didn't stop because we know that for women who quit the workforce for even 1 year, that is a 40 percent pay cut over the next 15 years.

This issue is about the family budget, the bottom line, the ability to make ends meet. And for too many families, the exorbitant costs of childcare place them just steps away from financial ruin.

My councilwoman was lucky to find good childcare near where she lived, but what happens when you move?

Well, we heard from another working mom about that. She and her husband had great daycare for their 1-year-old that they really loved. They were one of the lucky ones. Unfortunately, when they decided it was time to move, they couldn't find anywhere with space near their new home. So for months before they got off the wait list at a new center, they left their house every day at 6:30 a.m. to drop their child off at the old daycare center before starting their own long commute to work.

But even with that daycare system, she still needed help from a family member to pick up her son when the daycare center closed hours before she and her spouse finished work. And this dilemma has only gotten worse during COVID with childcare centers scaling back their hours due to workforce shortage issues.

All of these barriers come with a direct economic cost. This isn't just a woman's issue. This isn't just a children's issue. This is a critical economic issue facing our Nation.

In September alone, 26,000 women lost jobs while more than 200,000 men gained jobs. And that is not to mention the more than 300,000 women who left the workforce entirely that month.

We are leaving hundreds of billions of dollars of potential economic growth and improved GDP on the table by failing to fix this crisis and continuing to force women out of the workforce.

And we are certainly not solving the workforce crisis facing communities all across this country.

Tonight, you will hear from many of us outlining the stories that we ourselves and our constituents face, the concerns that the very real obstacles and challenges with childcare across this country are hampering too many women in the workforce. We are jumping through hoops and making tough financial decisions, calling on friends and family members just to find and maintain affordable and quality childcare. And as a result, our families are suffering.

The progress women have made in the workforce and in our society is suffering.

Our economic recovery post pandemic is suffering.

But it doesn't have to be this way.

We have the opportunity to make crucial investments in our childcare system to ensure that no family in this Nation pays more than 7 percent of their income on childcare. This budget plan represents an important start to helping working women stay in the workforce after having a child, help those who left re-enter, and keep more money in the pockets of hardworking families across this country.

And we can do all this as we ignite our economic recovery and build back better.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I would ask the Congresswoman, before

she leaves, she has also served in the military, and as she called upon this being an economic issue, is it not also a national security issue?

Ms. SHERILL. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. SPEIER. I yield to the gentlewoman from New Jersey.

Ms. SHERILL. Madam Speaker, it truly is. And as you know, as you chair your subcommittee and hear, I'm sure, from far too many families about as the difficulties of childcare grow, the difficulties of being a fully deployable force like our United States Navy grow.

So certainly, it is a national security issue, as well.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for participating today.

I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. LOIS FRANKEL), my friend and colleague, and co-chair of the Democratic Women's Caucus.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative SPEIER for her leadership today.

Madam Speaker, I have this speech and all that, but I don't want to make a speech. I told my friend I was just going to rant. She said: "Go to it."

I am listening to the cable news and all that, and they say the Democrats are fighting and they are talking about the moderates and the progressives, and I just want everyone to know this: We are fighting. We are fighting for you. We are fighting for the American people. And especially we are fighting to make sure that women and children are on this train when it pulls out on build back better.

First of all, I am a very proud member of the Florida delegation, but I am not really here as a Representative. I am here as someone who was a working mother and now I say I am a working grandmother. And I remember those days of having to juggle and make sure my son was in good, nurturing care as he was growing up and I was working full time. And now I have grandchildren whose parents both have to work full time, and I think about them all the time. Who are they going to be left with? What about when they have their colds?

I had forgotten, Representative SPEIER, that your first year of pre-K you are constantly sick. So not only do they go to school, then they have to have someone to take care of them when they have that cold. And I think my colleague from New Jersey gave a really good summary of what it is like for the parents struggling to make ends meet.

We know that parents are really making the least amount of money usually when their kids are the youngest. And it is really a stretch for so many parents to even afford childcare, and then for the sandwich generation to have to take care of the elderly or the disabled loved one who needs home care.

But I want to talk about also, Representative SPEIER and Madam Speak-

er, about the worker, the people in whose care we are leaving the people we love the most.

Representative SPEIER, did you realize that the average salary for a childcare worker or a home care worker is about \$27,000 a year?

Ms. SPEIER. It is about \$11 an hour, isn't it?

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Will the gentlewoman yield?

Ms. SPEIER. I yield to the gentlewoman from Florida.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. So you think about it. After you pay your rent, your car payment, your insurance, your food, you buy your clothes, it doesn't leave much, if anything.

And think about the responsibility of these workers, as I said, taking care of our precious children.

And I want to give you an example, because the average income of all workers in the United States is \$68,000. I would like that to be higher, too, and I am not saying that other people don't deserve good salaries, but just to give by comparison, a truck driver, \$46,000; a schoolteacher, \$64,000; an accountant, \$79,000; a plumber, \$60,000. I can go on and on. A salesperson, \$64,000.

I am not saying they don't deserve that money, but don't the people who take care of our loved ones also deserve to make money so they can have a decent life?

Ms. SPEIER. Isn't it stunning that we will pay those who watch our money six times as much money as we will pay those who take care of our children?

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Well, how about parking your car in a parking lot? We pay more to have someone watch our car than we do to watch our children.

And it is not only not fair and not right, but it also mostly affects women of color because that is who predominantly are our caretakers, and as a result, Madam Speaker, of this paying so little, there is a tremendous shortage.

Would you tell us, Representative SPEIER, what this means today in terms of the childcare and the home care industry in terms of getting people to even work the job?

Ms. SPEIER. Well, that is why we have lost so many slots in childcare centers around the country. That is why 60 percent of our families live in childcare deserts now. Think about that.

□ 1745

There is no childcare available, even if they have the resources to pay for it because the infrastructure doesn't exist anymore because we paid them so little. And the Build Back Better plan, as you know—and you can articulate—is going to change all of that.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Right. Because we are going to build back better for our children, and especially our working parents, for the elderly, who we love, and the disabled, by not only making it more affordable,

but also raising the wages of our care workers. We are talking about a transformational bill with Build Back Better.

Madam Speaker, I know you appreciate this, and those here today, is that we are fighting in this bill to have universal pre-K for all 3- and 4-year-olds in this country, getting our children off to a good start.

Representative Speaker, I know you can tell us, what does it mean when a 3- and a 4-year-old gets off to a good start, and how does that equate to how they are going to do later in life?

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, we all know that from 1 to 3 is when the brain is developing. That is when the resources need to be made available to these young infants and toddlers so that they will be prepared to then go into pre-K and then into school. If you don't have that experience, you are not going to have the children being able to do well in school and then to be able to be persons in our communities who are working very important jobs. So if it is truly about the children, let's make it about the children and build back better.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Madam Speaker, this is a declaration in the United States of America: That getting children off to an early start at ages 3 and 4 is as important as getting them into kindergarten or 6th grade, or whatever.

Madam Speaker, I know I said one last thing, but I do have one last thing, because we are talking about taking care of our families. If anything we learned from the pandemic, is the importance of being able to take care of a loved one when they are sick or disabled, or whatever. That is why the paid family leave provision of Build Back Better is so important.

In fact, is it true that we are the only industrialized nation in the country that does not have a paid leave policy?

Ms. SPEIER. That is correct. In fact, as I pointed out earlier, France had it back in 1913. Think about that. We are a century later and we are still struggling with parental and medical leave.

It is important to point out, the vast majority of this money, in terms of who takes advantage of parental and medical leave, it is for the individual. Fifty percent of the paid leave goes for an individual who is sick and who needs that particular benefit to be able to have the surgery or be provided the healthcare during a time of sickness.

So when we say paid parental and medical leave, the big beneficiary of that benefit is probably an older American who is in the workforce who, without this, would have to use their sick leave up and then probably go on unpaid leave.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. Madam Speaker, I am glad I got to do my little ranting and raving. I know I have colleagues who are going to add a lot to this.

The American people should know that the Democratic Women's Caucus

right here, and we represent people all over the country—

Ms. SPEIER. Ninety of us.

Ms. LOIS FRANKEL of Florida. There are 90 of us. We are fighting for you. We are going to build back better for our women, our children, our parents, our grandparents. We love them all. I have two grandsons; I want them to have the same rights as every little girl.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman and dear friend, Ms. FRANKEL.

Madam Speaker, I would also point out that as we look at the infrastructure bill that everyone is supporting, that trillion-dollar package is going to create 2 million jobs over the next 10 years. That is great, but 90 percent of those jobs are going to men.

Meanwhile, the pandemic has created an environment where 1.6 million women have left the workforce. That is the lowest participation of women in the workforce since 1988. We are going back. We are not going forward, unless we have the Build Back Better plan, which is going to provide the infrastructure for childcare and pre-K and the opportunity for women to get back to work.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. SCHAKOWSKY), my dearest friend.

Ms. SCHAKOWSKY. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

The Democratic Caucus—and I see that now we have all three of the leaders of that caucus that I am so proud to be a member of.

Madam Speaker, my daughter is a childcare worker. She works in a childcare center, and I am so proud of her and just the effort and the creativity and just the energy that she puts into this very low-paid job. If it weren't for someone else earning money in the household, she could not really afford to live on that pay.

I quote from a scholar who said, "most developed countries in this world have some kind of a robust social safety net. The United States has women." And when it comes to taking care of those in need, either as workers or as family members, it is mostly women.

I want to tell you that in the eighties, I was director—and proudly so—of the Illinois State Council of Senior Citizens. And as part of that, I was a cochair of the Long-Term Care Coalition that we had in Illinois.

At that time, there was no long-term healthcare policy in the United States of America. And guess what? There is no long-term care policy in the United States of America right now. Families are left to figure it out.

What are we going to do? I am getting older. I don't have family.

What am I going to do to take care of myself? I am getting older and my family is the only one available to take care of me.

I have to move in with my children, or they have to move in with me to

take care of me because there is no other choice.

Or you end up—I don't know—in some kind of an institution where people, again, are poorly paid—often women of color, often low-income women. In fact, for home care, the average worker does make about \$12 an hour, with no benefits. And if you have to travel from one place to another, there is no payment for that kind of transportation or getting there. It is not really doable. And so we have made pretty much no progress until now. And then the President of the United States, Joe Biden, said we are going to have Medicare, home- and community-based services in this country.

Now, he announced a very big amount of money to go for that. I don't know if that is going to be able to be paid for fully right now in the Build Back Better plan, but we are going to make a start. We are going to say yes. It is not just that we are going to leave families, women at home, not being able to go back to the workplace themselves. We are going to have a home care policy. And that is where people want to be, in their homes, in the United States of America.

I believe that we will see billions and billions of dollars that are going to be able to go to long-term care. And we are going to pay attention to these workers. It is not right. It is not possible to depend on workers who, themselves, live in poverty; don't have someone to care for them when they get older; often can't even afford to get—we talk about paid sick leave—have no health insurance, have no backup, if they get sick.

This is absolutely not working in this country. If we are going to build back better, we have to build back better for women. We have to build back better for women toward the end of life, as we age. We have to take care of women and children in this country.

It is really embarrassing, in a way, when we look at the rest of the world, how far behind the richest country in the world is in taking care of our families, the most in need in our country. But we are finally at a tipping and turning point right now. We have an administration, we have leaders in the House and the Senate who are now saying those days are gone.

We are now going to be a country that, as the President says, is built from the bottom up and the middle out. We are going to take care of workers. We are going to take care of families, and we are going to take care of women and children. I am just so proud to be part of a caucus that is determined to make this a reality, to transform the United States of America into a place that is safe and healthy and has opportunity for all of us.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her rousing speech and making the case, once again, that women are the backbone of this country. If we build back better in the Build Back Better plan, what we

will have is a situation where 2 million more jobs will be created. There will be \$24 billion more in take-home pay for women, which will then move through the economy and benefit all of us, as well.

It is my great pleasure to introduce one of our newer Members, but one of our feisty new Members.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. WILD).

Ms. WILD. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman. It is an honor to be part of the Special Order hour, it is an honor to be called feisty, and it is an honor to follow my good friends and colleagues, Representative FRANKEL and Representative SCHAKOWSKY as they talked about different aspects of the care economy. Representative FRANKEL was focused on childcare. She, of course, has grandchildren and is very focused on the care that they are receiving.

Madam Speaker, I want to tell a personal story, because it is something that I, frankly, having had this experience, this issue of the care economy might not resonate as much with me as it does.

In 2014, my mother was diagnosed with brain cancer. She was an incredibly independent woman, had always had a career until she retired, lived alone, gardened, took care of her home, and was, in all respects, somebody that, quite frankly, my sister and I thought was going to live to be 100. She was 82 at the time. Everything changed on a dime.

She was diagnosed with brain cancer in the summer of 2014. We, her daughters, were told that she had a pretty short time left to live. And it was a shock, nothing that we could in any way have planned for or anticipated or made prior arrangements. But we knew that it was incredibly important that we bring her to one of our homes for the remaining weeks or months that she had to live. So she was transported to my home where we had home hospice care for her.

I worked full-time as a lawyer at the time. My sister worked full-time. Obviously, our first concern was our mother, but both of us also had careers and bills that had to be paid, that we had worked for for so many years. And so what ended up happening was that we engaged home healthcare workers to help us take care of our mother. It was only because of those tireless home care workers that were with her at her bedside during the night so that I could sleep, providing essential care, and it was only because of them that my family and I could rest somewhat easier knowing that mom had the help and the resources that she needed around her.

I can tell you, quite honestly, that we would not have made it through those months had we not had the benefit of home healthcare workers. And I have to tell you, again firsthand, watching a parent or a loved one suffer

is hard enough, but those workers—and they were all women, I might add—who came into our home, made it just a little bit easier for me and for my sister and the rest of our family, knowing that she had a team of hardworking caregivers by her side through her sickness.

We know that home care workers have been on the front lines this past year. We have heard a lot about it. Quite honestly, until the pandemic, I don't know that we ever really heard much about home care workers, but they cared for our most vulnerable population. They put themselves and their families at risk. They did this while earning near poverty wages.

□ 1800

We know that home care workers are three times as likely to be living at or near the poverty line, with many of them struggling to afford their own healthcare while they provide essential services to the elderly and disabled Americans.

One home healthcare worker in my district who cares for a young man who is disabled told me that she has not taken a single day of vacation time in more than 10 years. She is a young woman, but she has been working for a long time. She hasn't taken a single day off. This kind of thing is completely unacceptable.

I stand with them in their call for a long-overdue raise, improved worker benefits, and the opportunity to organize and collectively bargain.

None of us are able to anticipate when we are going to need this kind of care for somebody in our family. It happens, as it always does, when you least expect it.

This is the smart thing to do. We have the opportunity now at a pivotal time. By the way, as our Nation grows older, the need for this critical workforce is only going to grow.

The commonsense investments that we are talking about as being part of the Build Back Better Act are absolutely commonsense investments that will create jobs but will also provide the necessary support both in terms of healthcare support and emotional support for families that our aging population is going to require.

For too long, this population of workers has been underpaid and undervalued, and that has to end with the Build Back Better Act.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments. I think it is important to point out, as she did, that when we are in a situation where we want to bring our family members who are dying home and keep them at home, and bring in home healthcare, we are actually saving money for the Medicare system because if they were hospitalized, the cost per day would be prohibitive.

I had my mother-in-law, my father, and my mother all living with us at the end of their lives, and it was a great source of solace to know that they

could stay home and bring in a home healthcare worker.

Ms. WILD. Madam Speaker, that is what we experienced. She was hospitalized for a full month before we brought her home for hospice care, during which she underwent all kinds of, frankly, unnecessary interventions that the facility was required to do. She was in daily physical therapy, which was almost ludicrous for a woman who had just weeks left to live. Yes, the cost factor to Medicare is significant as well.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Michigan (Mrs. LAWRENCE), a co-chair of the Democratic Women's Caucus, an outspoken advocate for so many of these issues.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Madam Speaker, I want to recognize the strong leadership of our co-chair, not only just now in her leadership role in the Democratic Women's Caucus, but throughout her tenure in Congress, JACKIE SPEIER. I thank her for this Special Order hour.

Since the start of this pandemic, women have lost more than 2 million jobs, and our labor force is down, for women, to 57 percent. Why does that matter? It is because women's labor force participation—please hear this number—contributes more than \$7 trillion to the U.S. GDP every year. So when you talk about building back with women, there is an economic incentive for us to do that in America.

The reality is there are far too many women in the United States who care for their children and the elders in their families. They are looking at situations where it is far too expensive.

We heard the description of my two colleagues caring for their elder parents. Do you know what that would mean if they didn't have a childcare or elder care system to take care of them?

In reality, in America, there are women who call in sick and who take off from work because they have a child that is suffering from cancer or a parent who is dying, and they are the only ones to do this. And they cannot afford to pay for it. We know that caring for our loved ones should not force women to make a choice between the two.

In Michigan, 44 percent of the Michiganders live in a childcare desert. As we talk about this, some people go like, you know, let them figure it out. In some scenarios, there isn't even a childcare facility for the parent to even consider or try to figure out how to pay for it. The reality is that there is such a large number of women who work two jobs, one to pay for childcare and one to put food, shelter, and clothing on their children, because there are not other options. They can't afford the childcare. So, do I lose my home and have childcare?

They work two jobs, and being away from home for an extended period of time has its own built-in problems.

I want you to know that the Build Back Better agenda increases access to

affordable childcare. How amazing is it to say that every family in America would not have to pay more than 7 percent of their income for childcare? We talk about childcare workers—and I just want to go back to the page that my colleague was just talking about.

Disproportionately, when we are at that point where we have needs, it is a woman who knocks on our door to provide the childcare, and it is a woman who knocks on the door to take care of our elderly. And, disproportionately, they are women of color, Black women, Hispanic women, Asian women who are the majority of caregivers in this country.

What do we do? We say our children and our elders are our most precious in our family. I will walk through fire for my child. There is nothing I won't do for my parents. But we disrespect these workers every day with these pathetic salaries that we have in America. In the Build Back Better agenda, we will be boosting the compensation for our care workers so that they can feel the respect and the honor and go home and take care of their own families.

Madam Speaker, I was a dear friend of Aretha Franklin, and every time I talk about this, I think about that song: All I am asking for is just a little respect.

In America, how can we say something is so precious to us but we disrespect those who show up, hold the hands, wipe the noses of our children, who tuck in our elders, and sometimes they are there when they take their last breath. America, we can do better.

I want you to know that building back better—and we have coined the term, and we will not walk away from that—and our colleagues are working because we can build back better in this country with human infrastructure. You can't do it unless you build back better with women, and that means paying attention to the service, to the need for care, for the need to invest in our human infrastructure.

If you want to improve poverty in America, invest in jobs and invest in women. The majority of those in poverty in the United States of America are women heads of households who have children. We make an effort to ensure no one goes hungry in America, but we disrespect those who care for our loved ones.

Madam Speaker, I want you to know that I am standing here today locking arms with my colleagues. I want to, and I will, demand that America build back better. I know that my colleagues in the Democratic Women's Caucus are fired up and ready to go because we know this opportunity to put our thumbprint on the values of America, of what we are going to do, is laid out in Build Back Better.

We know that we are negotiating and fighting, and we will not step down, just like the suffrage women who fought and knew it was time to stand up, march, chain ourselves to the fence, whatever we have to do to con-

tinue to build back better, and we are making this investment.

We have a President who has joined in. We have a Speaker of the House who has joined and locked arms with us and the Democratic Caucus. We are saying that Build Back Better will build back families, and it will transform the lives of women in America.

We can't wait any longer. On infrastructure, a pothole is an inconvenience, and we need to fix our potholes. We need to make sure that our children are not drinking lead-poisoned water. We need to make sure that our bridges and all those are fixed. But we also need to know that the human beings in this country deserve our passion, our work in the build back better agenda.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank my co-chair for that passionate speech. I think you pointed out, as heads of households, that the feminization of poverty that was dubbed some 30 years ago is still, in fact, what we are dealing with today.

Mrs. LAWRENCE. Yes.

Ms. SPEIER. That is part of what we are trying to do with Build Back Better.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania (Ms. HOULAHAN), my colleague on the Armed Services Committee and the Military Personnel Subcommittee, and someone who has served our country in the military.

Ms. HOULAHAN. Madam Speaker, I thank Representative SPEIER for yielding. It is a pleasure to be standing by her side and on the shoulders of so many powerful women who have gone before me and who have had this important conversation over and over and over again.

It is time that I have the opportunity to rise next to them in this Chamber for a couple of reasons. One, we do have the opportunity to celebrate some strides that we have recently made in securing the historic paid family and medical leave for some people. My part of this conversation will talk about that.

We also need to recognize where our Nation falls woefully short on delivering that promise to support all workers and families in Pennsylvania and beyond in this matter.

Like many of you all, I have pictures of my family in my office. For me, seeing the faces of my husband of almost 32 years and our beautiful daughters always buoys my spirit and is a constant reminder of the story I bring to Congress.

As a parent, my own story begins with the birth of my first child while on Active Duty serving in the Air Force. This chapter of my story is important, and it drives my commitment to this critical issue of work and paid family leave. In part because of the lack of affordable childcare and limited time for my own maternity leave, I separated from the service 30 or so years ago.

Sadly, my story is not unique. In fact, still to this day, we know that

there are problems, particularly with childcare issues on bases that have wait lists as much as 6 months to a year. It is that story that continues to play out in households, not just military households, but all households across our country.

Too many people are faced with the impossible choice of caring for their family or caring about their employment. The people in my district and all of our districts deserve better.

As an empathetic, compassionate country, we need to be able to understand and act on the repeated calls from the American people to help one another. In this great Nation, people should not be forced to choose between their kids and work or their aging parents and work.

It may be that you have not heard from any of those most affected, so I will share a couple of stories from my own community.

Susan, in Pennsylvania, told us that not having access to paid leave forced her to liquidate her retirement assets so she could care for her newborn.

Lynn, also from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is a home care health worker, and she shared with us that without a single day's sick leave, that meant that she is stuck with the choice between protecting her own clients and having a short paycheck and unpaid bills as a result.

When I think about the hardships of people like Susan and Lynn, I know that is not who we are as a Nation. We can't allow mothers and fathers to go into debt to raise their newborn babies and children. We cannot accept a system that forces those who are sick to choose between paying their rent or exposing their coworkers and clients to illness, especially as COVID continues to wreak havoc on our country.

We cannot ignore the crystal-clear research that confirms what we already know to be true, that paid leave is an overwhelmingly bipartisan and popular idea. Democrats, independents, and Republicans agree that family-centered policy strengthens our economy and small businesses; it does not weaken them. We can, in fact, be both pro-business and pro-family.

□ 1815

So while my story is deeply personal, I am also an engineer, so I would like very quickly to share some data and facts with you, Madam Speaker, in addition to these stories. And here they are: Policies like paid family leave will lift up the middle class. Sixty-two percent of workers earning less than \$30,000 a year received no pay during leave for family caregiving or personal health issues compared to only 26 percent of those earning more than \$75,000 a year. These policies will bring more equity to our workforce. Over a 2-year period, 26 percent of Black workers reported needing to take time for family or personal health, but not being able to take that time, and 13 percent of White workers reported the same.

These policies like paid family leave and paid medical leave will strengthen our economy. Research shows that women have a greater attachment to the labor force if they are allowed paid leave, and with an economy that needs every single worker, we cannot neglect 51 percent of our workforce.

These policies will also help small businesses. Over 60 percent of the executives in a recent Bipartisan Policy Center survey believe that paid family leave has a positive impact on employee morale, employee retention, and their company's ability to attract new employees.

Lastly, these policies will modernize our U.S. economy. As many of my colleagues have mentioned, we rank dead last—number 35 out of 35—amongst advanced economies offering competitive paid leave for mothers and others.

We simply cannot delay any longer, and the time is now to invest in paid family and medical leave.

I would like to say that we are making progress. In 2019 I worked with Chairs Maloney and Smith to successfully pass into law 12 weeks of paid family leave for 2.1 million Federal workers, and I led legislation through the Foreign Affairs Committee to harmonize parental leave policies for State Department employees around our country and around the world. This year, I helped to write a bill through the Armed Services Committee that codifies 12 weeks of parental leave for all of our uniformed servicemembers regardless of their branch of service.

This summer I championed an effort with over 100 of my colleagues urging House leadership to include paid family leave in Build Back Better, and, just yesterday, I co-authored this letter to President Biden, again, with more than 100 of our colleagues asking him to do everything in his power to protect these critical investments in our Build Back Better Act.

This comes at a time when we are making progress for the people. As House Democrats we are centering on you, the hardworking, sensible families of Pennsylvania, as we deliberately invest in our shared future.

As a member of the Democratic Women's Caucus, whom I am very grateful to stand here with today, I stand united with my colleagues tonight, and I assure you that we are ensuring that our economy is robust.

So when I see that picture of my family in my office and I remember what is at stake for my family and for yours, I will continue to work hard, along with all of my colleagues, to make sure that we are protecting these interests and these dreams for our American future and our people.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Pennsylvania for her comments.

I do believe that today a woman serving in the Air Force would have the benefits of 12 weeks of paid parental leave and, hopefully, in the very near future a childcare system that will not

speak of some 9,000 who are waiting for childcare slots that don't exist in childcare centers in the military.

It is shameful that we have to legislate that, but we are in the process of doing it.

I now will join my colleagues in welcoming our colleague from the great State of Illinois, one of our new but very effective members, Congresswoman MARIE NEWMAN.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Illinois (Ms. NEWMAN).

Ms. NEWMAN. Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to be here with all my colleagues from the Democratic Women's Caucus. I thank Representative SPEIER for hosting this Special Order hour tonight.

Madam Speaker, I rise today on behalf of the millions of parents struggling to pay for childcare each and every day. It has become abundantly clear: our current childcare system is absolutely untenable.

Just this past September more than 300,000 women left the workforce. As we all know, women are more likely to be the primary caregiver in a household. With a growing lack of affordable childcare options, we are seeing more women forced to quit their job in order to stay home and watch their kids.

Let's be clear: no parent should be forced to quit their job because they cannot find childcare they can afford. But the reality for too many families is that this is definitely the case. They cannot afford childcare in their area, period.

Just this week, NPR reported that one in three American families are struggling to find childcare they desperately need. I repeat: one-third of America's families cannot find affordable childcare.

In Illinois, 58 percent of residents live in a childcare desert—58 percent. That is more than half. In fact, infant care in Illinois costs just \$168 less than in-State tuition for a 4-year public college. So think about that, Madam Speaker. If you are a mom and a dad and you have kids of various ages, or you are getting prepared to have kids of various ages, you are thinking about childcare now, Madam Speaker, and you are paying effectively what you know you may have to pay for college in later years for your children. It is astonishing. We can and must fix this.

Under President Biden's Build Back Better Act, we can finally ensure every American has access to quality, affordable childcare. This will provide mothers with the support they desperately need to return to the workforce.

This is not only the morally right thing to do, but it is actually one of the strongest ways we can further boost our economy. I am tired of hearing some colleagues complain about a labor shortage while at the same exact time they are trying to block families from receiving the affordable childcare they need to return to work. I think that you don't have to go too far, Madam Speaker, to understand where

ever you go on any block in America, women are saying: I can't afford childcare which is why I am going back.

We have to stop blaming it on these fictitious things. Women need to have childcare so they can go back to work.

Enough is enough. For far too long our country has worked for the largest corporations and the ultra-wealthy while working families have been left behind. Let's change that by passing the Build Back Better Act for working families, and let's deliver universal, affordable childcare. Let's get this done.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for her comments and for her great leadership.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from the great State of California (Ms. BARRAGAN).

Ms. BARRAGAN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding.

I am here to talk about the Build Back Better agenda and two specific aspects that I want to highlight, some of which have been covered today, and to share some of my personal story.

The investments in home care and paid family and medical leave are personal to me, to my constituents, and to the American people.

Not just American workers get paid family medical leave benefits from their jobs. My sister, a Federal worker, is a nurse. She helps deliver babies at a military hospital in Colorado. Last November she was diagnosed with cancer. We are about the same age. She is a couple years older than I am. All of a sudden, we learned there is no paid family medical leave.

So what do people have to do?

They either have to leave their job, or go without pay, or in this case ask co-workers to donate their leave and their time so that somebody who is fighting cancer can actually focus on fighting cancer and getting better. And that is just wrong.

In America we need to take care of our workers. That is why I think it is so critically important that we include in reconciliation the paid family and medical leave. Unfortunately, most workers are forced to give up their wages and leave work to deal with health crises for themselves or loved ones. And this is true especially for women and women of color.

My sister's story is not unique. It is happening to workers across the country. So I am committed to making sure that we fight to keep these provisions in the Build Back Better agenda.

Secondly, caregivers, the home- and community-based care system is so critically important, especially for those on Medicaid and the disabled. This very year my own mother was able to qualify and get it after being on a waiting list for 8 months. It's not easy though, when you need that in-home care. This is a program that helps patients stay in their homes, as many older Americans wish to do and can't, so this program will be expanded.

But we also need to increase wages for those who are providing the care, because the wages just don't cut it. We know there is a shortage of healthcare workers now and providers. I have been dealing with this every day. Just last night I had to get on a red-eye.

Why?

To help provide some of that care.

So we need this human investment in people and to provide that care in home.

We saw what happened with COVID and what it did to those in institutions and nursing homes. If we can avoid that and have people in their homes, then we should expand this program and support it.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, the American economy has lost more than 500,000 jobs in the caregiving industry, and we are seeing firsthand how hard it is to hire. So investing in this is going to expand that. It is going to make this available to more Americans and those in need, whether you are an older American, Madam Speaker, or you are disabled.

In conclusion, by investing in families and our care economy, we will show compassion to those in need, improve care, and help women get back into the workforce. The investments in the Build Back Better package will be meaningful for our families and transformational for our economy.

Let's keep them—not cut them—for people like my mother who has severe Alzheimer's and for the rest of Americans who need that care.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I am very impressed that my colleague took the red-eye because she was caring for her family and she is here tonight caring for her constituents. I hope the gentlewoman can go home and get some rest.

Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON LEE). My colleague is a great advocate for all those in her State and throughout the country.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman for yielding. I am delighted to be with the gentlewoman and as well to be fighting for what is right, and that is what we are doing here today. We are fighting for what is right.

I am amazed when I hear people want to try to understand whether or not we are on the floor of the House talking about a safety net or whether we are on the floor of the House trying to create a care economy.

Well, let me be very clear. The clearness of my point is that the care economy is alive and well. It may be called by many names, but it is millions of women who have in the decades—some without names, some without categories—have been working to take care of people. They have been layered from those, as we have heard my sisters and my colleagues indicate, that they have been parents who were in the last stages of life, they are working mothers who need childcare, and they

are particularly care workers themselves who don't have childcare.

So the Build Back Better Act is what you want, America.

Many people say: What is in the bill?

This is what you want. You already have gotten portions of the child tax cut. It is a credit, but I like to call it a child tax cut. That is in there to be continued.

And I have heard the stories from my constituents, making ends meet, getting diapers and formula, and paying rent to be able to keep a roof over the head of toddlers and babies of single parents, mostly women. So we know how important the child tax credit is.

But then we talk about childcare and when we talk about kindergarten that will be universal. These are in the early stages of life. So I am excited.

Let me just mention one deviation, Madam Speaker. Let me just mention one deviation, and that is that in Texas we have got a compounded problem, people without childcare and people without healthcare because we never opted in—I say we—the State Government never opted into the expanded Medicaid. So we have working parents with 766,000 who are uninsured in the State of Texas.

Can you imagine, Madam Speaker, working parents with children who have no childcare; and they are not insured, and they have no healthcare?

So can we ease their burden?

Can we ease their burden?

Quickly let me ease their burden and ensure that—very quickly let me pay tribute to a school in Humble, Texas, where I met a young woman by the name of Aquila Gillespie who runs a subsidized childcare facility who desperately needs this childcare program which is going to allow her working parents—they are working parents in the care industry—who come to her with children at night, who have children who are, in fact, in early education, meaning that they are first and second grade. She works hard to open this school because most of the parents who enroll them in the school cannot afford childcare. These men and women are working people, and they work at night.

□ 1830

I stand here to join with my colleagues to say, what does America want? They want to know that this bill is going to help them. You can see how colorful it is, Creative Kids.

And that is Aquila. I want her to be known on television because she did this as a young woman, a young woman who was a single parent at the time. She hires and employs mothers and others who are in the working class.

Let me say childcare, America, is what you will get with the Build Back Better Act.

Ms. SPEIER. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentlewoman from Texas for her comments, and I thank Madam Speaker for allowing us to have this Special Order hour to talk about fami-

lies in America and what the Build Back Better plan will do to make sure that families have childcare, have pre-K, have the opportunity to go back to work.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

REALITY OF THE TAX AND SPENDING BILL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 2021, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Utah (Mr. OWENS) for 30 minutes.

Mr. OWENS. Madam Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. GAETZ).

THREAT OF ASSASSINATION

Mr. GAETZ. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding because I think someone maybe trying to kill me, and if they are successful, I would like my constituents and my family to know who stopped their arrest.

Madam Speaker, on October 8, 2021, a Twitter handle styled @CIABobisatyourdoor tweeted to @repmatgaetz: "Looky here, pal, I lived in Portland. Portland has ordered a hit on you. I accepted the contract. Have a good day."

Following this tweet, this individual traveled to Washington, D.C., and the Capitol Police recommended his arrest. That is information that was just shared with me by the Investigations and Threat Assessment section of the Protective Services Bureau and, specifically, George DiSesso. George shared with me that the Capitol Police recommended the arrest of this individual and that the Department of Justice refused to do so, declined to do so.

On the eve of the Attorney General testifying before the Judiciary Committee tomorrow, it is just yet another example of the Department of Justice having a double standard. If my name weren't Gaetz, if it were Omar or Tlaib, you bet this person would have been arrested because that is what the Capitol Police recommended. But the Department of Justice doesn't seem to care so much when it is Republicans. I thank my colleague for yielding to me.

Mr. OWENS. Madam Speaker, Utah is, in the Fourth District, now paying more for everything thanks to the Biden administration's disastrous economic policies. It is throwing our country back to a 1970s economy, and there is no end in sight.

The Democrats' solution? Pack far-left policies into their \$5.5 trillion spending package and tell the American people that it cost them nothing. It is a bogus talking point that couldn't be further from the truth.

In reality, this tax and spending bill would perpetuate labor shortages in Utah and across the country, which will harm economic recovery and hurt families in my district; violate Americans' financial privacy by increasing IRS access to our personal bank data;